

Application No. 09/869,513
Paper Dated: December 13, 2004
In Reply to USPTO Correspondence of September 20, 2004
Attorney Docket No. 1762-010921

REMARKS

The Office Action, dated September 20, 2004, has been reviewed and the Examiner's comments carefully considered. Claims 1-42 remain in this application, and claims 1, 39 and 40 are in independent form.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-42. In particular, claims 1-19 and 28-41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,963,913 to Henneuse et al. (hereinafter "the Henneuse patent"). In addition, claims 20-27 and 42 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over the Henneuse patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,911,045 to Leyba et al. (hereinafter "the Leyba patent"). In view of the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of these rejections.

Independent claim 1 of the present application is directed to a method for conducting at least one convention by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client. This method includes the steps of: receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions; receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions; and releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

Independent claim 39 of the present application is directed to a method for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client. In this claim, the method includes

the steps of: receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions; receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions; receiving at the central website from the attendee client information necessary to register for the convention; and releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

Independent claim 40 of the present application is directed to a system for conducting at least one convention, by facilitating the exchange between at least one meeting planner client and at least one attendee client. The system includes means for receiving, from the at least one meeting planner client, and means for electronically storing at a central website, convention content information for a plurality of conventions. In addition, the system includes means for receiving at the central website from the at least one attendee client a selection for convention content information of one convention from the plurality of conventions, and means for releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information.

The Henneuse patent is directed to a system and method for scheduling an event, subject to the availability of requested participants. In particular, the method includes the steps of: receiving event information, creating a reply page, creating and sending e-mail messages to requested participants, creating and sending messages to the scheduler, receiving reply information, updating the event confirmation page, receiving an event confirmation submitted by the scheduler, and creating and sending a message to available participants.

The Leyba patent is directed to a method and system for sharing information in the virtual reality world. The method includes registering users, displaying virtual reality environments, selecting representations of information locally available, placing representations into a shared environment, transferring the information and displaying data. It appears that the Examiner is using the Leyba patent for its disclosure of exhibit booth design, believing that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of the Henneuse patent and the Leyba patent.

There are many significant differences between invention of the present application and the systems and methods of the prior art, including the Henneuse patent and the Leyba patent. As a general background to claimed method and system, it is submitted that the present invention is directed to the technology behind how the meeting planner client and the exhibitor client can themselves, separately and interactively, encode a relational database with *functional descriptive* material and operate their distinct aspects of a virtual convention website with database updating processing and dynamic page information display, without any web-page-publishing or website programming (e.g., via HTML or similar) skills, but rather solely web browser skills. The meeting planner client can also set convention operational control parameter rules to customize the operation or processing flow of the virtual navigational experience of the exhibitor clients or attendee clients. The present invention provides a precise technology, where the meeting planner client and the exhibitor client can themselves separately self-develop, encode and fully maintain, through central website database-server program instruction control, single or multiple-show or virtual convention website processes. The present

invention further defines the technology behind how the end user clients of the convention or show process can interactively create and operate such websites.

It is further submitted that the present invention addresses the underlying technology for supporting the arrangement of integrated and centralized convention relationships or channels of multiple conventions (i.e., one-to-many and many-to-many) without the use of webmaster programmers or website development firms. These channels can be used for multiple shows or conventions for an individual show operator or a solitary non-profit association, or larger, a comprehensive-industry-wide website service, where all industry-wide shows and conventions (made up by single shows or conventions) are contained at a central website service site with relational database capabilities.

Prior to the Applicant's invention, no Internet-based application service provider ("ASP") or hosted systems existed that would permit meeting planners or tradeshow organizers within the meetings, convention and trade show industry, including exhibitors and attendees to:

- (i) interactively conduct purely 100% cyber-based conventions;
- (ii) augment venue-based conventions with an Internet-based experience; or
- (iii) host "combined" cyber- and venue-based conventions.

In addition, prior to the present invention, tradeshow websites were custom built by webmaster programmers for single-specific conventions. Meeting planners or tradeshow organizers within the meetings, convention and tradeshow industries could not, themselves, interactively encode a relational database with functional descriptive material

and operate single convention websites with solely web browser skills. Likewise, exhibitors within the meetings, convention and tradeshow industries could not, themselves, interactively encode a relational database with functional descriptive material and add virtual booths at a single convention website with solely web browser skills. Meeting planners or tradeshow organizers could not, themselves, interactively create multiple or unlimited conventions at a website using relational database cross-referencing fields, thereby minimizing data entry tasks while maximizing attendee browsing functions based upon a wide array of functional descriptive material. Fundamentally, the meeting planners or tradeshow organizers could not interactively create, themselves, integrated centralized conventions switches or channels in an end-user controlled framework. Exhibitors could not, themselves, interactively create and add virtual booths across multiple conventions within integrated centralized convention channels, thereby providing master purchasing agreement capabilities with the meeting planners or tradeshow organizers.

A significant technical problem associated with the prior art is loading and operating conventions, which has been solved by the present invention. In particular, the present invention implements numerous inventive steps, for example facilitating how a meeting planner client interactively loads convention content information for a single convention, and for a plurality of conventions. There are significant and inventive steps not only in receiving and storing convention content information, but the control parameter rules of how a specific convention will operate. There are even more inventive steps directed to how a plurality of conventions are interactively loaded and provided in terms of the virtual convention experience for the attendee client.

Applicant respectfully submits that there is nothing inherent or obvious about receiving from an attendee client a selection for convention content information from the plurality of conventions after such convention content information is loaded by a meeting planner client. The database design and computer programming supporting the process of receiving such a selection and releasing appropriate content for such a selection is novel and requires nonobvious database fields and relationships, and processing steps, for example processing controlled by the parameter rules included in the functional descriptive material for the attendee client's navigational experience.

With respect to the cited prior art, and in particular the primary reference, the Henneuse patent, this reference discloses a system and method for scheduling an event, subject to the availability of requested participants. The Henneuse patent is not related to the invention of the present application, which describes methods for conducting conventions by facilitating an exchange between meeting planner clients and attendee clients, where convention content information is received from a meeting planner client, a selection is received from an attendee client and information is released to the attendee client. Also, the Henneuse patent does not discuss the application service provider model of the present invention. The system and method claimed by the Henneuse patent, performed in its normal and usual operation, does not perform the system and method claimed by Applicant. Still further, there is nothing inherent about receiving from an attendee client a selection for convention content information from the plurality of conventions after such convention content information, including functional descriptive material, is loaded by a meeting planner client.

In the present invention, the database design and computer programming supporting the process of receiving a selection and releasing appropriate content for such a selection is novel and requires nonobvious database fields and relationships, and processing steps, including but not limited by processing controlled by the parameter rules for the attendee client's navigational experience. As set forth in the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP) 2106(IV)(B)(1)(a), "a claimed computer-readable medium encoded with a data structure defines structural and functional interrelationships between the data structure and the computer software and hardware components which permit the data structure's functionality to be realized" is statutory. It is submitted that Applicant's claimed convention content information is encoded with the data structure of the virtual convention venue databases and the website program instructions, which *defines functional and structural interrelationships* between the meeting planner client and the attendee client, the data structure and website program instructions (e.g., computer software), and the data storage device, CPU and network interface (e.g., hardware components), which permit the data structure's functionality to be realized.

The convention content information and data structures of the method and system of the present invention are embodied in computer-readable media and cause functional change in the computer. Thus, Applicant's convention content information should be considered *functional descriptive* material in terms of patentability and is evidence establishing a nonobvious difference between the claimed invention and the method and system of the Henneuse patent, particularly in view of its normal and usual operations. *See also* MPEP 2106(VI).

With respect to the independent claims of the present application, neither the Henneuse patent, the Leyba patent nor any of the prior art of record teach or suggest “conducting at least one convention” nor “convention content”, as set forth in all of independent claims 1, 39 and 40. Applicant submits that the Examiner may have misinterpreted Applicant’s use of the term “convention content” in the present application, and the term “event subject”, as used in the Henneuse patent at column 1, lines 38-41. In particular, the Examiner appears to have viewed the term “event subject” (col. 1, lines 38-41) as two separate nouns – deriving, in isolation, a term not consistent with the teachings of the Henneuse patent. A closer inspection of this section of the Henneuse patent indicates a noun followed by an adjective: “...and method for scheduling an event subject to the availability....” Taken out of context, “event subject” as two nouns renders a significantly different meaning. Applicant respectfully submits that the meaning of the noun “event”, coupled with an adjective clause “subject to...” is not comparable to and conflicts with Applicant’s term “convention content”. Further, “...event subject...” (from col 1, lines 38-41) is again repeated in claim 1 of the Henneuse patent, which suggests the subject matter is defined by such terms that in fact limit its scope with the language “A method for scheduling an event subject to the availability of requested participants implemented by a server application, comprising:...” The claim limitation “subject to” clause in the Henneuse patent is clearly a statement of intended use and not related to the Applicant’s “convention content” term. Accordingly, the Henneuse patent does not define, disclose, teach or suggest convention content information as specifically set forth in the independent claims of the present application.

Further, “convention content” is actually a component of the defined term “convention content information” in Applicant’s specification and claims. As defined throughout the present application, the term “convention content information”, as used in the present application defines extensive functional descriptive material. This functional descriptive material supports Applicant’s contention that there are multiple nonobvious and distinguishing differences between the claimed invention and the Henneuse patent. Specifically, the present application includes multiple virtual convention venue databases 300, and the conventions database 350 includes computer program-defined fields for “convention content information”. Such functional descriptive material, as set forth throughout the specification and claims of the present application is not taught or suggested in the Henneuse patent, the Leyba patent or any of the prior art of record, and is not part of its normal and usual operation. Without such functional descriptive material, it is impossible for the process of the Henneuse patent to carry out the present invention in normal operation.

None of the Henneuse patent, the Leyba patent nor any of the prior art of record teach or suggest methods and systems for “conducting” conventions, as specifically set forth in the independent claims 1, 39 and 40 of the present application. As discussed above, the Examiner’s use of the Henneuse term “event subject” is misplaced. As set forth at column 1, lines 38-41 of the Henneuse patent: “In accordance with the present invention, a system and method for scheduling an event subject to the availability of requested participants are provided that provide advantages over previously developed calendar and scheduler applications.” A system and method for scheduling an event does not have the same meaning and is not the same as conducting a

convention, as set forth in the claims of the present application. Notwithstanding Applicant's detailed specification, the verb root "conduct" has primary definition, according to Webster, meaning "to bring by or as if by leading". Therefore, Applicant's claim can be interpreted as "A method to bring by, or as if by leading, the convention ...", whereas, the Henneuse patent's use of the verb "scheduling" has a primary definition, according to Webster, meaning "to place in a schedule", with the noun schedule "a written document" synonymous with a "timetable".

Still further, the Henneuse patent, the Leyba patent and/or any of the prior art of record do not disclose or teach an "attendee client", as set forth in the independent claims of the present application. In particular, Applicant submits that the term "attendee client" is not used in the Henneuse patent at column 1, lines 44-47. Instead, the Henneuse patent reads: "The server application receives event information submitted by a scheduler using a client application to access an event definition page." No attendee client or similar computer user appears in this reference. The term "client application" in this occurrence appears to be a computer processing within a network term, as in a "client/server program application" used by the scheduler.

Still further, none of the prior art of record teaches or suggests a "meeting planner client", as set forth in independent claims 1, 39 and 40 of the present application. Such a "meeting planner client" is not disclosed in the Henneuse patent. The description and specification of the Henneuse patent at Fig.1 and column 2, lines 47-53 states: "FIG. 1 is a block diagram of one embodiment of a network, indicated generally at 10, interconnecting a server system and a plurality client systems. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, a client system 11 is connected to network10 and executes a client application 12.

Client system 11 is associated with a user who desires to schedule an event (a scheduler)." As discussed above, the term "client" in the Henneuse patent is used as a computer processing term, as in "client/server program application". "Scheduler" is clearly defined here as "a user who desires to schedule an event". A "scheduler" is not comparable to Applicant's "meeting planner client". The present application defines the "meeting planner client" as follows: "The term meeting planner client is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual (or association) that organizes and manages the convention, event, conference or trade show." Further, Applicant specifies the ASP client processing functions of the invention for the meeting planner client: "Further interpretation on meeting planners work can be obtained from Meeting Professionals International (MPI) located in Dallas, TX." The term "meeting planner" encompasses "scheduler"; however, a "scheduler" does not encompass a "meeting planner".

It is further submitted that the term "conventions", as used in the claims of the present application, is not taught or suggested in the prior art. It appears that the Examiner defines the term "convention" as any event "an official gathering", such as business meeting event (col. 2, 19-23 and col. 5, lines 19-21 of the Henneuse patent). Review of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary of the word "convention" does not disclose use of "event", "an official gathering", "business meeting", or "business meeting event" in any definition, cross-reference, synonym or explanation. Further, at col 2, 19-23 of the Henneuse, the reference reads: "This provides an ability to permit scheduling of events across domains, networks, boundaries and platforms such that the scheduler and various participants are not required to be using the same or similar platforms and

applications.” This is then defined as the Henneuse patent methods’ normal and usual operation, where the scheduling process can be accomplished across the Internet networking platform, again not a method for conducting a convention.

Next, at column 5, lines 19-21 of the Henneuse patent, the reference reads: “In this embodiment, the event to be scheduled is a business meeting, and the event reply page 60 is a web page on an Internet. Event reply page 60 includes a meeting information area 62 which provides the name and description of the event.” Applicant first notes that the event reply page 60 and specification at col. 5, lines 19-21 of this reference are for a single event to be scheduled, not a plurality of conventions as found in Applicant’s claim 1. Further, the type of descriptive material specified at col. 5, lines 19-21 of this reference – “meeting information area 62 which provides the name and description of the event” - is merely stored, so as to be read or outputted by a computer without creating any functional interrelationship, either as part of the stored data or as part of the computing processes performed by the computer. Therefore, this descriptive material alone does not impart functionality either to the data as so structured, or to the computer. Accordingly, the descriptive material specified at col. 5, lines 19-21 of the Henneuse patent should be considered nonfunctional by the Office (*see* MPEP 2106(IV)(B)(1)(b)) and as such, does not satisfy the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 101. Therefore, Applicant submits that this nonfunctional descriptive material cannot be considered by the Examiner as a valid basis for rejection of the claims of the present application.

None of the prior art of record, including the Henneuse patent and the Leyba patent, teach or suggest the “at least one attendee client”, as set forth in the independent claims of the present application. Specifically, the term “the at least one

attendee client” is not described in the Henneuse patent at element 13 (Fig. 1). Instead, the Henneuse patent at column 2, lines 55-57 reads: “Each client system 13 is associated with a user whose attendance is to be requested at a scheduled event (a participant).” Further, in claim 1 of the Henneuse patent, particular use of this portion of the specification with “requested participants” is used. The use of requested participants supports the Henneuse patent claim that it is directed to a system and method for scheduling an event, subject to the availability of requested participants. The Henneuse patent is not related to Applicant’s method for conducting conventions by facilitating an exchange between meeting planner clients and attendee clients. Applicant defines the “attendee client” as follows: “The term attendee is also used in a manner similar to current use in the convention industry to designate an individual that attends a convention, event, conference, or trade show.” Further, the present application specifies the rule-driven functional descriptive material processing functions for the attendee client. Comparing a “requested participant” to an “attendee client” is analogous to comparing an “invitation list” to “party goers”.

Still further, none of the prior art of record teaches or suggests “releasing from the central website to the at least one attendee client the selected convention content information”, as set forth in the independent claims of the present application. In particular, this step is not disclosed as element 13 in Fig. 1 or as the “event reply page” at column 3, lines 59-62 of the Henneuse patent. As discussed previously, the “at least one attendee client” is not taught in the Henneuse patent. Also, the Henneuse patent reads: “After receiving the messages sent by server application 16 on behalf of the scheduler, the requested participants can use the link to the event reply page and client applications

14 to access and view the event reply page.” The “meeting information area 62” of the event reply page is nonfunctional descriptive material. To accurately ascertain the event reply page’s normal and usual operations, reference is made to column 3, lines 62-64 of the Henneuse patent, which reads: “The event reply page allows each requested participant to view the one or more options and respond concerning their availability.” This clarification wording is not the method, but an explanation of the normal and usual operations of the event reply page – to view the date options and respond concerning their availability. The Henneuse patent is clearly a scheduling model, for scheduling an event subject to the availability of requested participants. Alternatively, the present invention is a unique model for conducting a plurality of cyber-based conventions where, in this step, the selected convention content information is released from the central website to the attendee client. Therefore, this is a different model in its normal and usual operations.

In summary, the present invention provides for the creation of a virtual convention venue where the participating attendee client can search the *functional descriptive* material and experience a virtual navigational experience based on the convention operational control parameter rules, pre-set by the meeting planner clients and exhibitor clients. The claims are directed to association meeting planners and tradeshow organizers (i.e., the end-users) building online tradeshows interactively by themselves. The claimed invention solves many fundamental problems and introduces functions missing in early website work and patents, and is a significant contribution to the state of the art.

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For the foregoing reasons, none of independent claims 1, 39 and 40 are anticipated by or rendered obvious over the prior art of record, whether used alone or in combination. In particular, none of the Henneuse patent, the Leyba patent nor any of the prior art of record teach or suggest the method and system for conducting a convention, as specifically set forth in these claims. There is no hint or suggestion in any of the references cited by the Examiner to combine these references in a manner that would render the invention, as claimed, obvious. Reconsideration of the rejection of independent claims 1, 39 and 40 is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-38 depend either directly or indirectly from and add further limitations to independent claim 1 and are believed to be allowable for the reasons discussed hereinabove in connection with independent claim 1. Further, claims 41 and 42 depend directly from independent claim 40 and are believed to be allowable for the reasons discussed hereinabove in connection with independent claim 40.

The Examiner also rejected claims 20-27 and 42 by combining the Henneuse patent with the Leyba patent. Further to the discussion above, claims 20-27 and 42 have additional and independent grounds for patentability. Specifically, Applicant submits that the Leyba patent does not teach the subject matter addressed in claims 20-27 and 42. The present invention provides a precise technology, where the exhibitor client can, themselves, separately self-develop, encode and fully maintain, through central website database-server program instruction control, such as "programming steps include pick-a-booth, pick-a-show, pick-a-content-level, and pricing calculator with payment processing" for single or multiple-show or virtual convention websites. The Leyba patent does not specify, suggest or claim this exhibitor-self-loading

of functional descriptive material including exhibit booth design and content based on the selected meeting and convention, after such “criteria” or functional convention content information is set up by the meeting planner client.

As further specified in the present application at page 16, lines 8-14: “the exhibitor/sponsor client support program instructions 900 on the central website server 200 assist the exhibitor/sponsor client 103 in determining what conventions are appropriate for their participation, and in ordering and setting up a booth (or booths) and sponsorship at a convention in the virtual convention venue databases 300”. And at page 9, line 31 – page 10, line 23, the present application specifies the data structure and cross-referencing fields with respect to the exhibitor/sponsors database 320 and the booths database 330, and the other databases. Finally, at page 43, line 6 - page 45, line 25 of the present application, Applicant specifies, at length, the program instructions for the exhibitor client, from selecting the meeting(s) and convention(s) through the exhibit booth building process, for each selected meeting and convention based on the meeting planner policies and fee options included in the functional convention content information.


Accordingly, Applicant further submits that, even given the failings of the Henneuse patent as a primary reference, the present invention, as defined by the claims, is not obvious in view of the Henneuse patent in view of the Leyba patent. A rejection of claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is inappropriate unless the functional descriptive material would have been suggested by the prior art. Therefore, for all of the above reasons, reconsideration of the rejections of claims 1-42 is respectfully requested.

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For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicant believes that claims 1-42 are patentable over the cited prior art and in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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